

# JFK SPECIAL REPORT THE COP AND THE KILLER

By GLENNA WHITLEY From D Magazine November 1998

The dingy 10-by-12 interrogation room was starkly furnished with a battered table and three old wooden chairs.

A pale young man, handcuffed and sweating slightly, sat with a wild stare in his eye. With him were two Dallas police detectives: Richard Stovall, who sat quietly at the end of the table, and Stovall's partner, who would lead the questioning.

"I'm Detective Rose," the second cop said finally, deliberately omitting his first name to establish his authority. "What's your name?"

"Well, you're the goddamned cop," the suspect snarled.

Gus Rose looked at two ID cards he'd removed from the young man's pockets. They were issued to two different names. Neither meant anything to Rose. "Well, which of these are you?" the detective asked.

"You're die goddamn cop. You figure it out."

"Oh, we can figure it out," Rose replied, unruffled. "No problem with that."

He placed the cards carefully on the bare tabletop and offered his suspect a cigarette. The man shook his head: "I don't smoke."

Rose left his cigarettes in his pocket. If his subject didn't smoke, Gus Rose wouldn't smoke. He wouldn't get a cup of coffee; he wouldn't go to the bathroom; he wouldn't even stand up and stretch.

He took a few moments to scrutinize his man: Slightly built, brown hair, brown eyes, 24 or 25 years old. Cheap shirt and pants. Rose guessed the fellow didn't work, or if he did, it was at some menial job.

The suspect had suffered a small red abrasion over his right eye while scuffling with officers at the Texas Theater in Oak Cliff. But the young man didn't seem dazed or confused at all. He was angry and arrogant. "I don't know what I'm doing here," he said.

Beneath a tightly controlled exterior, Gus Rose masked his deep shock. J.D. Tippit, a friend and fellow police officer, had been shot to death, and the man sitting at the table across from Rose was alleged to have committed the murder.

Of course, the Tippit shooting was overshadowed by all the commotion in the homicide room outside. Detectives were barking into phones or trying to interview the waiting line of witnesses who had seen the assassination of President Kennedy.

A homicide detective for only three years. Rose would later gain renown as a skilled interrogator. Blocking out the hubbub, he turned his attention to the hostile suspect.

"I don't own a gun," the man said. "I didn't have that gun. They planted that on me when they arrested me."

"Have you ever owned a gun of your own?" Rose asked evenly.

"No," he retorted. "I never owned one."

Searching for a neutral topic. Rose asked what he did for a living.

"I work at a printing company."

"You do?" Rose said, brightening as if interested in this line of work. "Which printing company do you work for?"

"Oh, just a local printing company. I work downtown at a printing company."

Rose looked at the man's hands, rigid in his lap. No ink discolored the skin or nails.

"What do you do for the printing company?" Rose asked.

"I told you. I'm a printer."

"Do you have any family that lives in the area?" Rose asked.

"Oh no, I don't have a family,"

"Well, have you ever been married?" Rose wanted him to talk about *something*.

"No, I've never been married." The answer was dismissive.

No family, no wife, no children. Gus Rose could detect no accent, no clue as to where the man was from. He obviously was lying.

*This guy's not even trying to convince me he's telling the truth.* Rose thought. *It is as if nothing that happens in this room could possibly matter.*

"You know, you never did give me your name," Rose said. "You know my name. It would sure be better for us to talk to each other if you tell me your name."

"You just figure it out, if you can," the suspect sneered. "See if you can."

Rose tried not to let his frustration show. Then a thought came to him: This man has no conscience. Rose's gut told him the man was some kind of crackpot-and he was also the man who had killed J.D. Tippit.

A knock at the door interrupted me detective's ruminations. He opened the door a crack, blocking the suspect's view. There stood his boss. Capt. Fritz.

"We've just come from the book depository." Fritz said. "We've pretty well finished with the investigation at the site. We've accounted for all the employees who work there except one. I want you to get some officers to go with you and find the guy who's missing. He's a suspect."

Rose winced. "Well, I would. Captain," Rose said, "but I'm talking to the guy here that killed Tippit." If another interrogator stepped in, the process would be set back.

"I'll have somebody else work that out," Fritz said. "I want you to find this guy."

"Well, okay," Rose said reluctantly. "What's his name?"

Fritz fished around in the breast pocket of his blue suit and brought out a piece of yellow paper.

"His name is Lee Oswald."

Rose went cold. He turned to look at the suspect, who stared back defiantly. On the table lay the two identification cards. Rose looked down at them. One read "Alec Hiddel." The other: "Lee Oswald."

"Captain," Rose said, "I think we've got him right here."

DET. GUS ROSE SPENT THE NEXT 48 HOURS at the center of the JFK investigation, collecting some of the most damning evidence against Oswald. Rose was the first police officer to interview his wife, Marina; the first to search the Irving house; and the first to interview Wesley Frazier, the neighbor who drove Oswald, carrying a long package, to work that morning. When Rose returned to the Irving house the next morning, he found a print and the negative of the now-familiar photograph of Oswald carrying a rifle and wearing a pistol on his hip. He later sat in on the second interrogation of Oswald. By then, the Dallas police had both murder

weapons, traceable to the assassin. They knew that weeks before, Oswald had been practicing at an area rifle range. And they knew his movements on Nov. 22 matched those of the sixth-floor shooter and Oak Cliff street killer.

Until now, Rose has never talked to the press, but he's fed up with the conspiracy machine telling Americans that their government killed their president.

All that Gus Rose did not accomplish was to finish that one-on-one with Oswald. It might never have happened, of course, but Jack Ruby made sure it didn't.